

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Fisheries Division**

April 28, 2008

Proposal to review the number of rods authorized for use while fishing

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is considering a change in the number of rods allowed for use by State recreational anglers while fishing. Currently, the number of lines (rods) an angler may use on most waters is limited to 2. Several years ago, however, angling groups worked with the legislature to allow 3 lines while in the act of trolling for trout and salmon in lakes Michigan, Huron or Superior. This discrepancy has caused some confusion among anglers and has created law enforcement problems. The Department has been asked to revisit this regulation.

1. What are the current line limits for recreational anglers?
 - A person shall not use more than 2 single lines or 2 single rods and lines while fishing. The exception to this rule is that on Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Superior and the St. Mary's River, persons in the act of trolling may use 3 lines and rods if they are targeting trout and salmon.
2. How long have the current regulations been in place?
 - The 2-line limit has been in effect for more than 80 years.
 - A change in statute in 2001 created the opportunity for anglers to use 3 lines on Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Superior, and the St. Mary's River if they are trolling and targeting for trout and salmon.
3. What is the new proposal?
 - The new proposal is to allow anglers to use 3 lines statewide, including inland and Great Lakes waters.
4. Does the Department have the authority to change line limits?
 - An increase to three lines statewide will require a change in statute, which can only be accomplished by an act of the legislature.
 - The 2001 change in statute did grant the Department limited authority to increase the number of lines that may be used to harvest trout and salmon while trolling on the Great Lakes and connecting waters.
 - Returning the limit back to 2 lines statewide for all anglers does not require legislative action.
5. What are the line/rod limits in adjoining jurisdictions?
 - Indiana: 3 rods
 - Minnesota: 1 rod, 2 rods may be used while ice fishing
 - Ohio: 2 rods
 - Ontario: 2 rods
 - Wisconsin: 3 rods

6. What are the potential positive aspects of increasing the number of lines to 3 statewide?
 - Currently there is a disparity in the number of lines that can be used by certain anglers, depending on where and how they are fishing. This proposal will create a uniform regulation for all anglers.
 - Regulations would be simplified.
 - Anglers trolling for species other than trout and salmon will be able to use an additional line than is currently allowed.
 - Ice anglers will be able to use any combination of rods/tip-ups for ice fishing.
 - Anglers will have a greater flexibility in choosing their level of effort.
7. What are the potential negative aspects of increasing the number of lines to 3 statewide?
 - Overcrowding could result at piers, below spillways, or wherever high concentrations of anglers already occur.
 - Ice, bank, and surf anglers, especially those fishing in groups, may utilize larger fishing areas (i.e. length of river bank), which may cause user conflicts.
8. What are the potential biological implications of this proposal?
 - There are none that can be readily identified, but there is insufficient information available to predict all of the potential impacts if there is increased harvest (e.g., potential for additional harvest of northern pike during ice fishing). While some anglers may reach their daily bag limit more quickly or frequently using an additional line, it is likely that other anglers will be less efficient harvesting fish with additional lines.
9. Do the fishery biologists believe this change would have any impact to the fishery?
 - An increase in the line limit may increase effort, but since most anglers do not catch their daily bag limit of fish it is very unlikely such a change would result in a significantly higher level of harvest that could negatively impact a fishery.
 - In certain situations, especially ice fishing for vulnerable species such as northern pike and muskellunge, there may be an overall increase in catch.
10. Will daily bag limits also be increased?
 - No. The proposal only affects the number of lines. There is a separate proposal for increasing the Chinook and coho salmon daily bag limit.
11. Has the current 3-line limit for trout and salmon on lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior harmed the fishery in any way?
 - No. Those anglers that fish for trout and salmon in the upper Great Lakes simply have the opportunity to increase their efficiency when fishing.
12. Why do we need line limits when there are already daily bag limits in place?
 - Line limits and daily bag limits work together to distribute catch equitably among anglers. If set too high, one result can be that relatively few anglers harvest a disproportionate share of the catch.
 - Socially, line limits create a fair level of effort and use of “space”, especially in shoreline and pier fishing situations.

13. When will this regulation take effect?
- The earliest that this regulation would take effect is April 1, 2009.
14. Are public comments being accepted?
- Yes, public comments are being accepted through June 13, 2008, via e-mail to DNR-FISH-3lines@michigan.gov or letters sent to Fisheries Division, PO Box 30446, Lansing, MI 48909. Comments will also be accepted after June 13, 2008, through various forums such as Natural Resources Commission meetings.